

# Improving Quality of Care for Schizophrenia: Returning Veterans to Employment

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Healthcare Provider Behavior



# The Quality Problem

- Schizophrenia is the most common serious mental illness
- Evidence-based practices exist; in routine practice, patients do not receive these services
- No multisite studies have substantially improved the quality of care for schizophrenia within the context of usual care

# Enhancing Quality of care In Psychosis (EQUIP) Study Design

- Medium-scale multi-site implementation study
- 15-month clinic-level controlled trial
- 4 VISNs: intervention and control site in each VISN

# EQUIP Team

## VISN 3

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Stone Shih  
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# Targets for Quality Improvement

- VISN leadership chose 2 care targets for improvement at intervention sites
  - Supported Employment
  - Wellness

# Evidence: Efficacy Trials of Supported Employment

- At least 15 RCT and several quasi-experimental studies
- Rate of competitive employment averaged to 59% for those in SE versus 19% to those in traditional employment programs
- Substantial minority still do not get jobs
- Keeping a job is a challenge (need ongoing supports)
- Consumers report working improves other aspects of their lives

# Quality Improvement Intervention

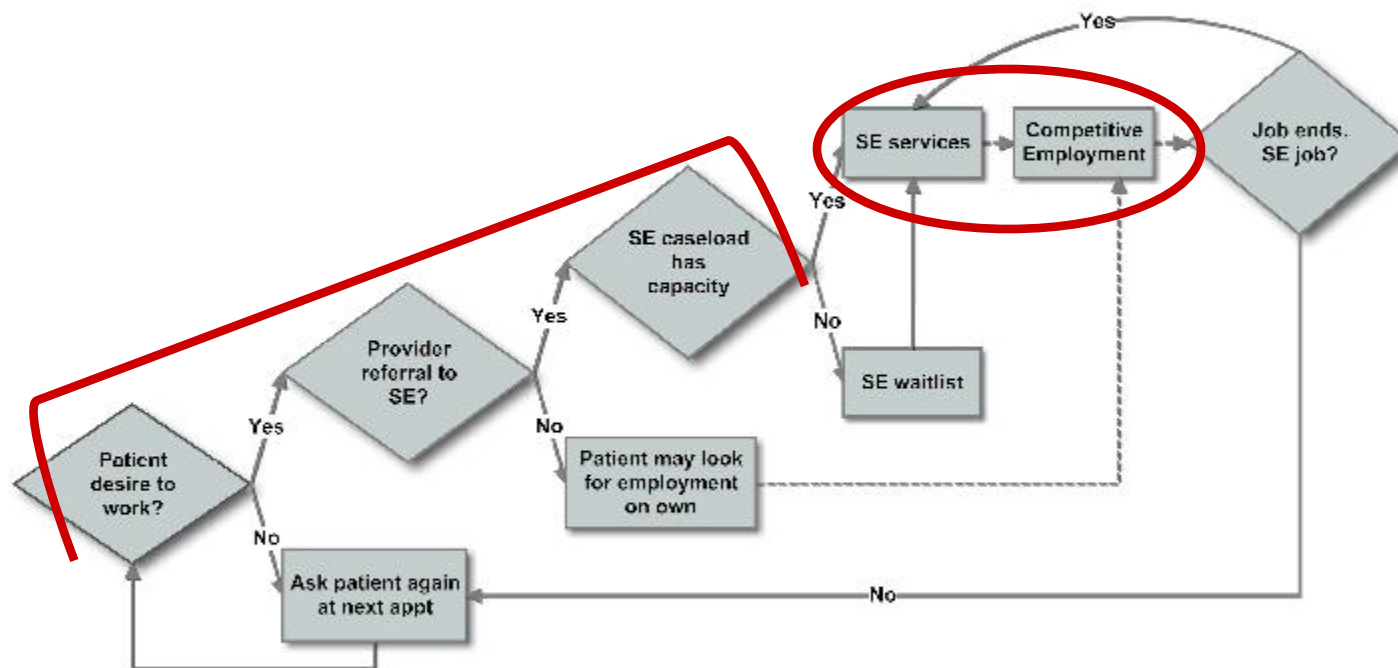
- Evidence-based Quality Improvement (EBQI) strategies were used to support implementation
  - Leadership engagement
  - Opinion leaders
  - Provider and patient education
  - Continual feedback to staff and managers
  - Quality Improvement teams (local)

# EQUIP Study Design

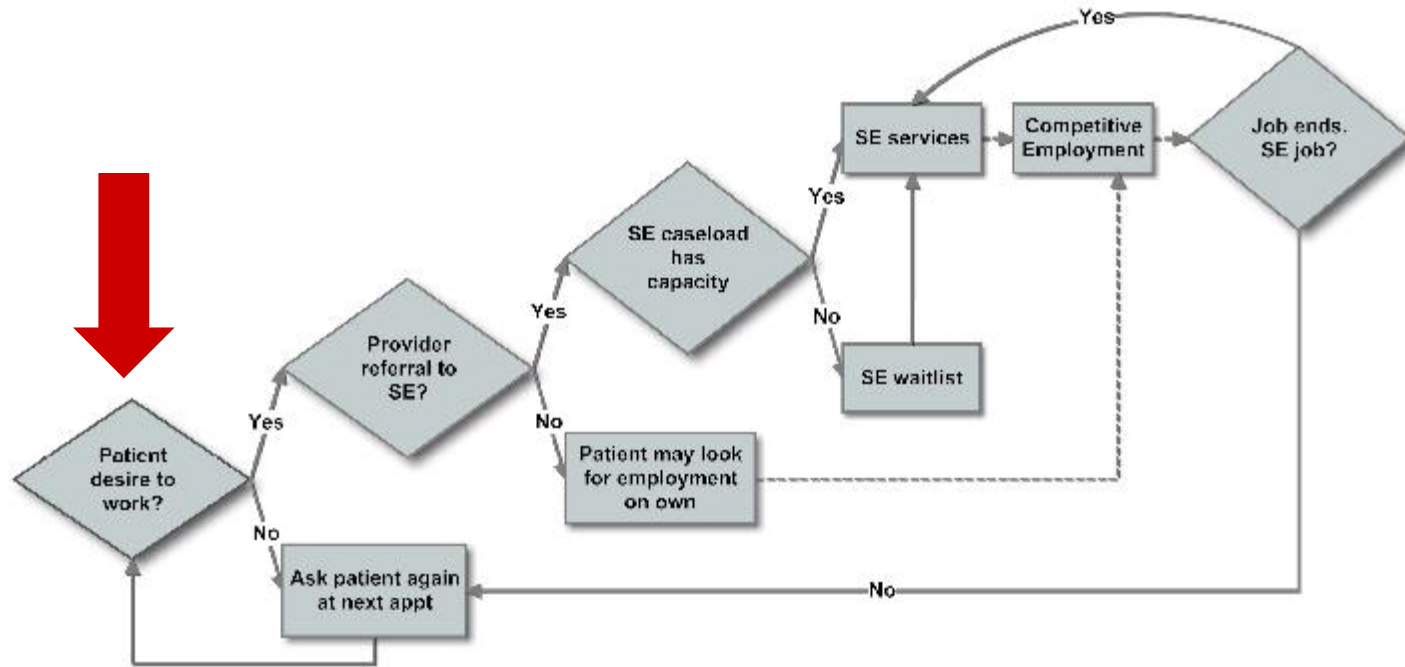
- Implementation guided by organizational change conceptual framework
- Used mixed methods to evaluate processes of and variations in implementation and effectiveness
- Patients and staff surveyed at baseline and FU
  - 801 Veterans; 201 providers and managers



# Process Map: Supported Employment



# Process Map: Supported Employment



# EQUIP: Procedures

## Routine Inquiry: Desire to work

### Patient Assessment System



- Audio-computer assisted self-interviewing
- Kiosk in waiting room
- For Patients
- Use at every visit

**Patient Assessment System Report**  
Results from today's assessment for Z.Z. (Thursday, June 05, 2008)



**WORKING FOR PAY**

You have reported that you are not working but might like to.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO**

You should discuss with your doctor a referral to a new VA program that helps people find and keep jobs.

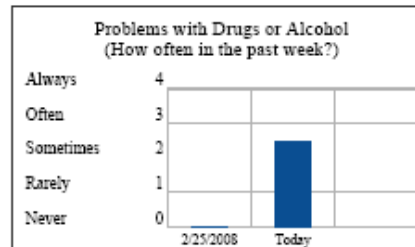
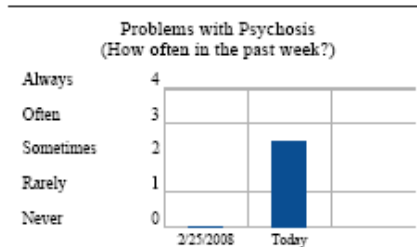
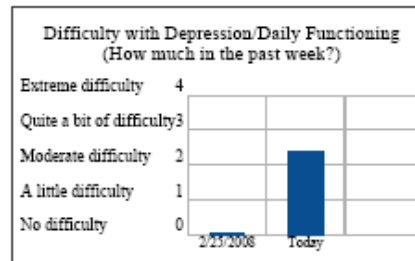
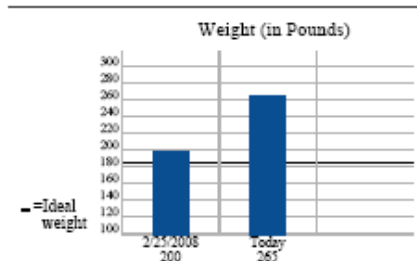
**YOUR WEIGHT**

Your Body Mass Index (BMI) is 35.9. That means, for your height, you are overweight. Medications you are taking for your illness could be making this worse. It is important that you take prescribed medications.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO**

- Talk with your doctor about switching to a medication that does not cause weight gain.
- Talk to your doctor about a referral to your local wellness program. That program can help you lower your BMI by helping you to eat a balanced diet and get enough exercise.

**How you are doing with.....**



# Kiosk Report

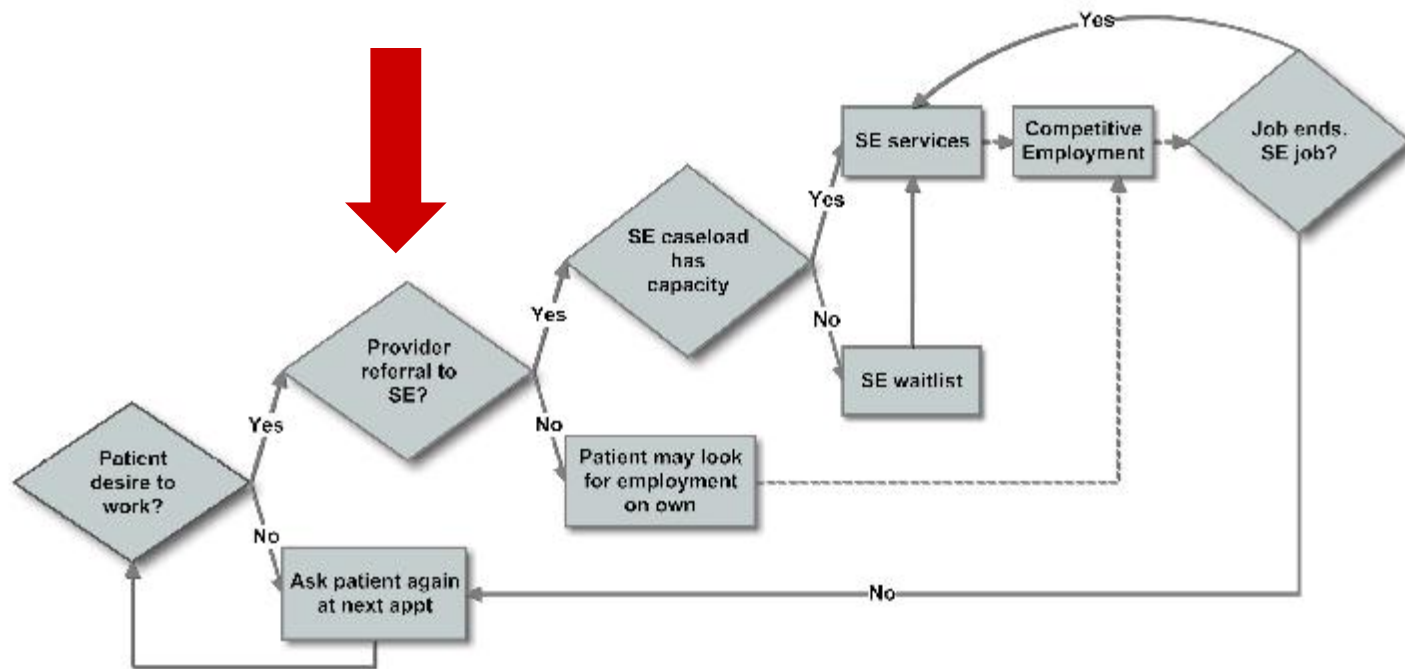
## Working for Pay

You have reported that you are not working but might like to.

## What you can do

You should discuss with your doctor a referral to new VA program that helps people find and keep jobs.

# Process Map: Supported Employment



# Variation in Provider Attitudes and Knowledge

- [Supported employment] “barely exists.”
- “There’s also the supported employment program and that’s for people that can actually already work in the community off the bat.”
- “...wish we could clone the Supported Employment worker.”

Enhancing Quality  
of care in Psychosis



For more information—

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- Long Beach VA Healthcare System
- Michael E. DeBakey VAMC
- Northport VAMC
- Olin E. Teague Veterans' Center
- Overton Brooks VAMC
- Southern Nevada VA Healthcare System
- Waco VAMC
- UCLA Health Services Research Center
- Los Angeles VA Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center



## *Supported employment is an evidence-based approach.*

- ✓ Only 15% of veterans with schizophrenia are employed in competitive jobs.
  - ♦ 70% want to work
  - ♦ 50% can work when using supported employment
- ✓ Works with people of all ages in urban and rural communities

## *All interested veterans are eligible.*

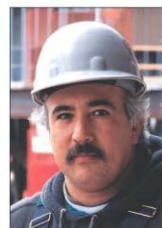
- ✓ **No exclusion** due to symptoms, substance abuse, hygiene, or prior work history

## *Services are integrated with mental health care.*

- ✓ Employment specialist coordinates with the veteran's mental health treatment team by:
  - ♦ attending regular meetings
  - ♦ working together to share information and solve problems

*"Employers consistently tell us that workers with serious mental health disabilities do a good job. . .and that they are a productive segment of the labor force."*

—Judith A. Cook, PhD  
Professor of Psychiatry  
University of Illinois at Chicago



## *Job search is individualized and rapid.*

- ✓ Based on veterans' preferences, strengths, and experiences
- ✓ No need for lengthy pre-employment preparation or "work readiness" training

## *The goal is competitive employment.*

- ✓ Regular jobs in the community
- ✓ At least minimum wage full- or part-time pay

## *Supports are continuous.*

- ✓ On-going benefits counseling
- ✓ One-on-one assistance to help veterans find and keep jobs
  - ♦ Interview practice
  - ♦ Resumé preparation
  - ♦ Getting necessary tools and supplies

## *Refer veterans interested in working.*

- ✓ Talk about employment with veterans with schizophrenia.
- ✓ If a veteran is interested, refer to Supported Employment or contact your VISN Coordinator.

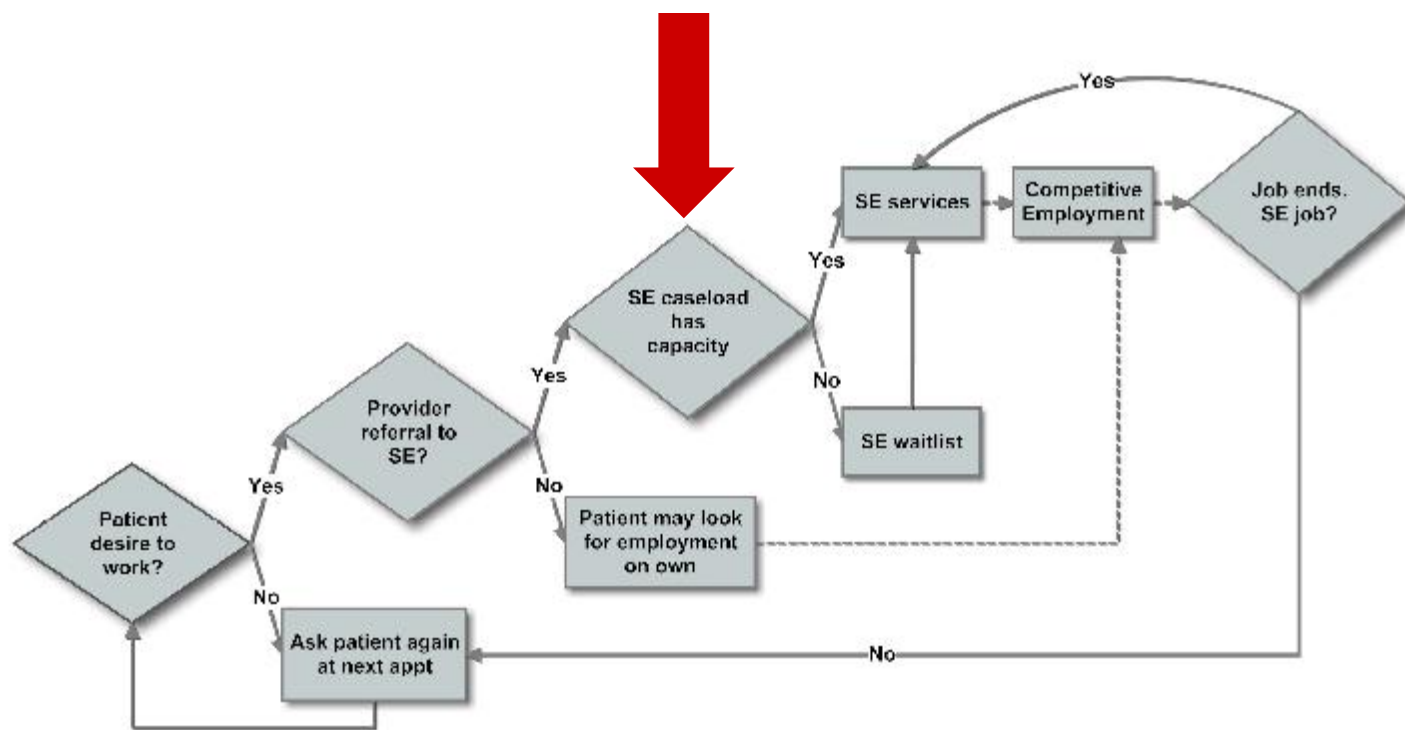


### **EQUIP: Enhancing Quality of care in Psychosis**

- National HSR&D Quality Enhancement Research Initiative
- Joins with VA leadership to improve care for individuals with schizophrenia
- National Principal Investigators: Alexander Young, MD, MSHS, and Amy Cohen, PhD, Greater Los Angeles VA



# Process Map: Supported Employment





# Quality Improvement Report

Intervention Status			
<b>Date:</b>	1/30/2009		
<b>VISN</b>	A		
Supported Employment (SE)		Number of Patients	%
	Possible or definite interest on the PAS	53	
	Interest when discussed	53	
	Referred to SE	43	81%
	Seen by SE	2	4%

# Quality Improvement Report: Benchmark

Benchmark Status		
Date:		
	1/30/2009	
VISN	A	
Patients seen by SE/ Patients who want to work		%
	Other Site	22
	Other Site	19
	Other Site	97
	YOUR SITE	4

# EQUIP Outcomes: Patient Preferences

- 85% of patients with schizophrenia are unemployed
- 53% want to return to work
- 6% have received SE services in previous year

# EQUIP: Outcomes

## SE Service Utilization

- Individuals at intervention sites were 2.2 (95% CI: 1.1-4.3) times more likely to utilize SE services during the study as compared to individuals at control sites ( $p < .05$ )
  - Controlled for baseline utilization & desire to work

# EQUIP: Outcomes

## Competitive Employment

- Intervention sites: employment rates increased from 11.8% to 14.8%
- Control sites: employment rates decreased from 17.7% to 16.2%
  - Non-significant difference at  $p < .05$
  - Controlled for baseline employment, age, and desire to work

# EQUIP Outcomes: Organizational Impacts

Managers used implementation data to:

- Hire another FTE SE specialist
- Reorganize care so that psychology interns could provide SE services
- Increase SE capacity
  - Discharge those who were not succeeding, not appropriate

# Conclusions

- Quality of care improved through implementation of evidence-based practices
- Appropriateness of care was improved by:
  - identifying patients' needs and preferences for competitive employment
  - utilizing evidence-based QI strategies to ameliorate gaps in care

# Collaborations to Consider

- MIRECCs (VA Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center)
- CIPRS (VA Center for Implementation Practice & Research Support)
- NEPEC (VA Northeast Program Evaluation Center)



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- VA HSRD Center of Excellence, Study of Healthcare Provider Behavior
- NIMH UCLA-RAND Center for Research on Quality in Managed Care

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